2015

C

Understanding Child Trauma

NCTSI
National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative

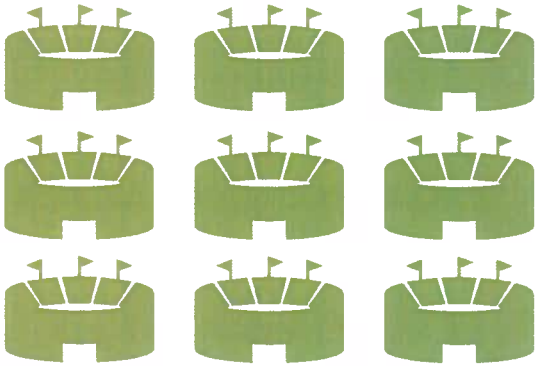
Child trauma occurs more than you think.

More than **TWO THIRDS OF CHILDREN** reported at least 1 traumatic event by age 16.[1] Potentially traumatic events include:

- PSYCHOLOGICAL, PHYSICAL, OR SEXUAL ABUSE
- COMMUNITY OR SCHOOL VIOLENCE
- WITNESSING OR EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
- NATURAL DISASTERS OR TERRORISM
- COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
- SUDDEN OR VIOLENT LOSS OF A LOVED ONE
- REFUGEE OR WAR EXPERIENCES
- MILITARY FAMILY-RELATED STRESSORS (E.G., DEPLOYMENT, PARENTAL LOSS OR INJURY)
- PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ASSAULT
- NEGLECT
- SERIOUS ACCIDENTS OR LIFE-THREATENING ILLNESS

The national average of child abuse and neglect victims in 2013 was **679,000, or 9.1 victims** per **1,000 children.**[2]

Each year, the number of youth requiring hospital treatment for physical assault-related injuries would fill **EVERY SEAT IN 9 STADIUMS.**[3]



1 IN 4 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS was in at least **1 PHYSICAL FIGHT.**[4]

1 in 5 high school students was bullied at school; **1 IN 6 EXPERIENCED CYBERBULLYING.**[5]

19% of injured and 12% of physically ill youth have post-traumatic stress disorder.[6]

More than half of U.S. families have been affected by some type of disaster (**54%**).[7]

1 Copeland, W.E., Keeler G., Angold, A., & Costello, E.J. (2007). Traumatic Events and Posttraumatic Stress in Childhood. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 64(5), 577-584.

2 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2015). Child maltreatment 2013. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2013.pdf

3 4 5 National Center for Injury Prevention and Control: Division of Violence Protection (2014). Taking Action to Prevent Youth Violence: A Companion Guide to Preventing Youth Violence: Opportunities for Action. http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/pdf/opportunities-for-action-companion-guide.pdf

6 Kahana, S., Feeny, N. C., Youngstrom, E. R., & Drotar, D. (2006). Posttraumatic stress in youth experiencing illnesses and injuries: An exploratory meta-analysis. Traumatology, 12, 148-161. doi: 10.1177/1534765606294562

7 Save The Children (2014). 2014 National Report Card on Protecting Children in Disasters. http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/SC-2014_DISASTERREPORT.PDF

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration SAMHSA www.samhsa.gov

Understanding Child Trauma

NCTSI
National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative

It's important to recognize the signs of traumatic stress and its short- and long-term impact.

The signs of traumatic stress may be different in each child. Young children may react differently than older children.

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

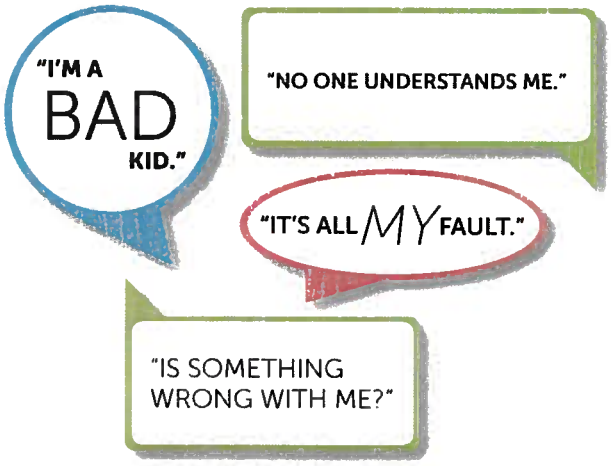
- Fear being separated from their parent/caregiver
- Cry or scream a lot
- Eat poorly or lose weight
- Have nightmares

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

- Become anxious or fearful
- Feel guilt or shame
- Have a hard time concentrating
- Have difficulty sleeping

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL CHILDREN

- Feel depressed or alone
- Develop eating disorders or self-harming behaviors
- Begin abusing alcohol or drugs
- Become involved in risky sexual behavior



THE BODY'S ALARM SYSTEM

Everyone has an alarm system in their body that is designed to keep them safe from harm. When activated, this tool prepares the body to fight or run away. The alarm can be activated at any perceived sign of trouble and leave kids feeling scared, angry, irritable, or even withdrawn.

HEALTHY STEPS KIDS CAN TAKE TO RESPOND TO THE ALARM:

- Recognize what activates the alarm and how their body reacts
- Decide whether there is real trouble and seek help from a trusted adult
- Practice deep breathing and other relaxation methods

IMPACT OF TRAUMA

The impact of child traumatic stress can last well beyond childhood. In fact, research has shown that child trauma survivors may experience:

- Learning problems, including lower grades and more suspensions and expulsions
- Increased use of health and mental health services
- Increased involvement with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems
- Long-term health problems (e.g., diabetes and heart disease)

TRAUMA is a risk factor for nearly all behavioral health and substance use disorders.

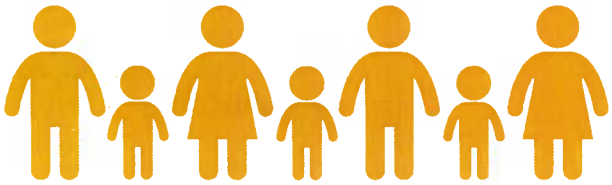
NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration SAMHSA www.samhsa.gov

Understanding Child Trauma

NCTSI
National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative

There is hope. Children can and do recover from traumatic events, and you play an important role in their recovery.



A CRITICAL PART OF CHILDREN'S RECOVERY IS HAVING A SUPPORTIVE CAREGIVING SYSTEM, access to effective treatments, and service systems that are trauma informed.

GET HELP NOW
https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov
http://nctsn.org/resources/get-help-now
http://www.healthcaretoolbox.org

Not all children experience child traumatic stress after experiencing a traumatic event. With support, many children are able to recover and thrive.

As a caring adult and/or family member, you play an important role.

REMEMBER TO:

- ☐ Assure the child that he or she is safe.
- ☐ Explain that he or she is not responsible. Children often blame themselves for events that are completely out of their control.
- ☐ Be patient. Some children will recover quickly while others recover more slowly. Reassure them that they do not need to feel guilty or bad about any feelings or thoughts.
- ☐ Seek the help of a trained professional. When needed, a mental health professional trained in evidence-based trauma treatment can help children and families cope and move toward recovery. Ask your pediatrician, family physician, school counselor, or clergy member for a referral.
- ☐ Visit the following websites for more information:
  - http://www.samhsa.gov/child-trauma
  - http://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-violence
  - http://www.nctsn.org

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration SAMHSA www.samhsa.gov

SMA-15-4923 Printed 2015

Understanding Child Trauma

NCTSI
National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative

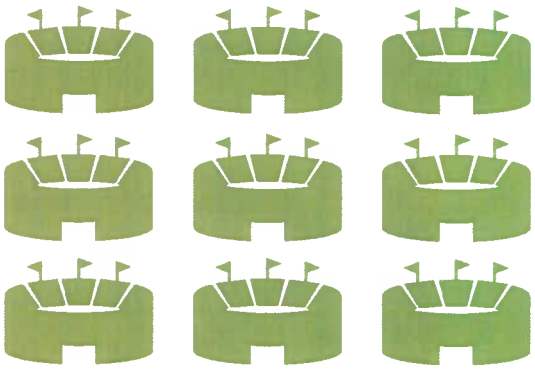
Child trauma occurs more than you think.

More than **TWO THIRDS OF CHILDREN** reported at least 1 traumatic event by age 16.[1] Potentially traumatic events include:

- PSYCHOLOGICAL, PHYSICAL, OR SEXUAL ABUSE
- COMMUNITY OR SCHOOL VIOLENCE
- WITNESSING OR EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
- NATURAL DISASTERS OR TERRORISM
- COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
- SUDDEN OR VIOLENT LOSS OF A LOVED ONE
- REFUGEE OR WAR EXPERIENCES
- MILITARY FAMILY-RELATED STRESSORS (E.G., DEPLOYMENT, PARENTAL LOSS OR INJURY)
- PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ASSAULT
- NEGLECT
- SERIOUS ACCIDENTS OR LIFE-THREATENING ILLNESS

The national average of child abuse and neglect victims in 2013 was **679,000, or 9.1 victims** per **1,000 children.**[2]

Each year, the number of youth requiring hospital treatment for physical assault-related injuries would fill **EVERY SEAT IN 9 STADIUMS.**[3]



1 IN 4 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS was in at least **1 PHYSICAL FIGHT.**[4]

1 in 5 high school students was bullied at school; **1 IN 6 EXPERIENCED CYBERBULLYING.**[5]

19% of injured and 12% of physically ill youth have post-traumatic stress disorder.[6]

More than half of U.S. families have been affected by some type of disaster (**54%**).[7]

1 Copeland, W.E., Keeler G., Angold, A., & Costello, E.J. (2007). Traumatic Events and Posttraumatic Stress in Childhood. *Archives of General Psychiatry*. 64(5), 577-584.

2 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2015). Child maltreatment 2013. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2013.pdf

3,4,5 National Center for Injury Prevention and Control: Division of Violence Protection (2014). Taking Action to Prevent Youth Violence: A Companion Guide to Preventing Youth Violence: Opportunities for Action. http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/pdf/opportunities-for-action-companion-guide.pdf

6 Kahana, S., Feeny, N. C., Youngstrom, E. R., & Drotar, D. (2006). Posttraumatic stress in youth experiencing illnesses and injuries: An exploratory meta-analysis. Traumatology, 12, 148-161. doi: 10.1177/1534765606294562

7 Save The Children (2014). 2014 National Report Card on Protecting Children in Disasters. http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/SC-2014_DISASTERREPORT.PDF

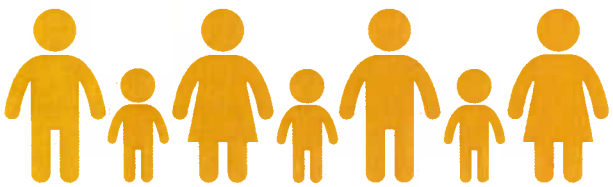
NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration SAMHSA www.samhsa.gov

Understanding Child Trauma

NCTSI
National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative

There is hope. Children can and do recover from traumatic events, and you play an important role in their recovery.



A CRITICAL PART OF CHILDREN'S RECOVERY IS HAVING A SUPPORTIVE CAREGIVING SYSTEM, access to effective treatments, and service systems that are trauma informed.

GET HELP NOW
https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov
http://nctsn.org/resources/get-help-now
http://www.healthcaretoolbox.org

Not all children experience child traumatic stress after experiencing a traumatic event. With support, many children are able to recover and thrive.

As a caring adult and/or family member, you play an important role.

REMEMBER TO:

- ☐ Assure the child that he or she is safe.
- ☐ Explain that he or she is not responsible. Children often blame themselves for events that are completely out of their control.
- ☐ Be patient. Some children will recover quickly while others recover more slowly. Reassure them that they do not need to feel guilty or bad about any feelings or thoughts.
- ☐ Seek the help of a trained professional. When needed, a mental health professional trained in evidence-based trauma treatment can help children and families cope and move toward recovery. Ask your pediatrician, family physician, school counselor, or clergy member for a referral.
- ☐ Visit the following websites for more information:
  - http://www.samhsa.gov/child-trauma
  - http://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-violence
  - http://www.nctsn.org

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration SAMHSA www.samhsa.gov

SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. SMA-15-4923 Printed 2015

Understanding Child Trauma

NCTSI
National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative

It's important to recognize the signs of traumatic stress and its short- and long-term impact.

The signs of traumatic stress may be different in each child. Young children may react differently than older children.

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

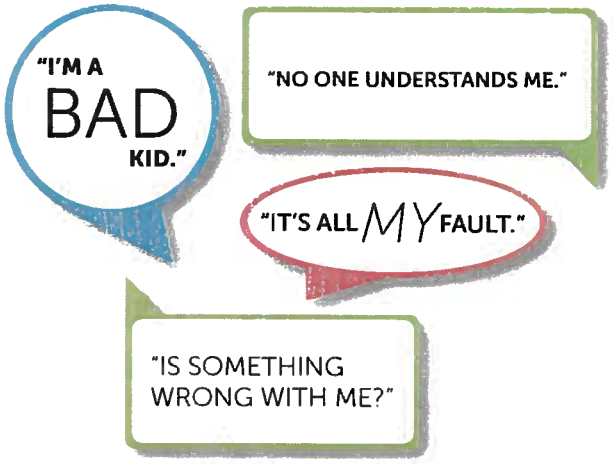
- Fear being separated from their parent/caregiver
- Cry or scream a lot
- Eat poorly or lose weight
- Have nightmares

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

- Become anxious or fearful
- Feel guilt or shame
- Have a hard time concentrating
- Have difficulty sleeping

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL CHILDREN

- Feel depressed or alone
- Develop eating disorders or self-harming behaviors
- Begin abusing alcohol or drugs
- Become involved in risky sexual behavior



THE BODY'S ALARM SYSTEM

Everyone has an alarm system in their body that is designed to keep them safe from harm. When activated, this tool prepares the body to fight or run away. The alarm can be activated at any perceived sign of trouble and leave kids feeling scared, angry, irritable, or even withdrawn.

HEALTHY STEPS KIDS CAN TAKE TO RESPOND TO THE ALARM:

- Recognize what activates the alarm and how their body reacts
- Decide whether there is real trouble and seek help from a trusted adult
- Practice deep breathing and other relaxation methods

IMPACT OF TRAUMA

The impact of child traumatic stress can last well beyond childhood. In fact, research has shown that child trauma survivors may experience:

- Learning problems, including lower grades and more suspensions and expulsions
- Increased use of health and mental health services
- Increased involvement with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems
- Long-term health problems (e.g., diabetes and heart disease)

TRAUMA is a risk factor for nearly all behavioral health and substance use disorders.

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration SAMHSA www.samhsa.gov